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2 December 1995

Memcon: Rudi Gresham, administrative assistant to General Westmoreland; 1130 AM; 904-775-8982; FAX 904-775-9917

Westmore is signing a letter to me (I take it to all participants in the Vietnam Veterans Institute symposium of Nov. 9), but he wants especially to congratulate me and thank me for my comments at the conference about General Westmoreland.

What comments? (I had gotten a message, while I was away, from someone at the Daily Oklahoman about my comments about General Westmoreland. My message to him after I returned was not answered. (Patrick McGuigan, op editor of the Daily Oklahoman: 405-475-3466. Original message: Mark Green covered conference but didn't cover your presentation--I was intrigued by comments you made about Westmoreland." When I heard this, I didn't--and don't--remember any comments specifically mentioning Westmoreland...)

Gresham's version (he wasn't there; apparently he bases his version on the Oklahoman, plus a page of transcript of my comments from Peter Rollins: he is sending me both, by FAX now): "General Westmoreland didn't lie. It was McNamara and Johnson who lied to the public."

As I told him, I don't believe I used those exact words, or even that exact sentiment. But it seems basically correct, and would probably be a fair inference from what I did say.

G's feedback on what he heard about my overall comments: "The highpoint of the conference. The headline-maker."

A headline in the Daily Oklahoman, I said. "Oh, it won't end there. Westmoreland is going to comment on the conference, and particularly on your comments. And it is being edited for a book. There will be news."

G said my comments were praised by "a number of four-star generals and admirals." (Presumably, Sharp, Westy, perhaps Zumwalt; Singlaub and Rheault were also there).

I understood him to say, at the outset, that it was very courageous for me to say what I said...he said this several times, and each time I demurred, saying that it was simply what I believed...but on a later comment that "it must have taken tremendous courage to do what you did" it turned out (on my questioning) that he was referring to the release of the Pentagon Papers.

"When I was in Vietnam [two tours, captain, Special Forces

officer, "I speak French and German" (ha-trained for Europe. East Europe?)] we were in a little corner of the field, we didn't have the big picture. But without the Pentagon Papers, we still wouldn't know what went on, and who knows how long it would have gone on."

I said: Let me be frank about this. We all in that room--the high-level officers I was addressing, and me--did know that McNamara and LBJ were lying to the public, in a very serious way, and we kept silent about that. So we did participate in deception. [This was the point I made to Westy outside the courtroom in New York on the first day of his suit against CBS, after assuring him that I took for granted that he had not lied to or deceived the President as the CBS program asserted. After I said, "But we did, you and I, General, participate in [the President's] deception of the public [by keeping silent about it], and we should not have done that."

At that point his lawyer took him by the arm, said "You don't have to listen to this" and wheeled him away. Looking back, I realize that Westmoreland himself didn't react to this statement--he had already thanked me warmly for my first assurance--and moreover, he and/or his lawyer may not have understood the second proposition, absent the bracketed provisions above.]

[notes: G on Westy on me: tremendous courage; supportive of him; good impression., Generals' opinion at the time: they couldn't have done it; but not so critical of me as I might think; courage, honesty. [anti-McN!]

On Bosnia: deadset against it; no US national interest, or not enough; another Vietnam, bog, cold, guerrilla, 800 year conflict;;;

inc. Powell;

will retired generals come out against it now? On my pressing, G is raising it with Westy; he is spokesman; toyed with idea of joint statement with me (!) (I discouraged this). But I pressed that time is now to raise concerns, express views

Westy on 1967, possible joint resignation of JCS: Westy thought it would be worst thing for country, do irreparable harm. (As I said on Donohue: good that he was no MacArthur (given his actual desires in VN, NVN, nucs...)

doesn't want me to publicly back away from assertions by Robbins and Oklahoma as to what I said, given that generals are all; admiring of me now (and Westy seems to want to use it as his "vindication").

Could they have spoken out then...and what if they (not I) had?

Consider: they did want two other things in 1965: bigger, faster airstrikes (the ground buildup couldn't have been faster, as Allen Smith quotes John Prados as demonstrating from a logistical point of view: from beginning, built for 500,000 troops, as fast as possible); and mobilization. That totally demolishes the Quagmire Myth! (I've never noticed this before!) They not only predicted, and called for, a big war; but they wanted honesty about it.

LBJ apologists look at this only from the point of view of LBJ, that it would have sunk the Great Society immediately (instead of within a year, as his strategy did). But the JCS certainly cannot be accused of desiring either to deceive the President (this is the point I did make in my "Quagmire Myth") or the public . This latter contrast with the Administration, and its implications for the Myth.

It could not have been predominantly self-interest or service interest that they kept silent about their recommendation on mobilization, and LBJ's rejection of it. (Likewise, about their recommendations on airstrikes. There weren't even major leaks about this dissent.

They may have hoped they would get their way eventually, if they went along (and might have lost the issue in a public fight; ;though more likely they would have won! Likewise, there could have been a backlash to their revolt; yet again, they would probably have won. And they could have provoked hearings, like those of 1967, earlier. Why didn't they? Ask Westy's aide, or Westy, etc.?!)

[Amazing thought: the generals and admirals--e.g. Zumwalt--could tell me a lot, on the grounds that I would deal honestly with them, even if we had profound disagreements on various issues and values. (As on the cadre in Vietnam: though there, there was not the value or team difference that there has been now for a long time).

Told him of my speech draft in July 1965; he thought it was amazing. That was the only direct reference to Westy I actually recall. Told him, my first reaction to the story by Rollins and McGuignan was that I had not addressed Westy directly: ("Gen. Westmoreland, you did not lie to the public. McN and LBJ lied to the public."

Told him: that was true; I believed it, I had said it before--to Westy himself, in fact--and would say it again. But I didn't think I had said it on Nov. 9, though it was a fair inference from what I had said.

He said at least two people had confirmed that I had, or at least that they had understood me to have done so. And after reading the FAX of Rollins' statement, I said, on reflection, that-

-though I still have no memory of it--it was conceivable that I had said it, though it would have been an offhand remark, in passing (which could be why I don't remember it, though Westy and the generals would).

As I said, it was not my main point; my purpose was not to exonerate anyone, but to identify LBJ and McN definitely as having deceived the public (and to charge myself--not the military--with culpability for not having thought of revealing the truth).

(On Westy's not revealing the lie about the 100,000 in 1965; that was understandable on several grounds, including that it served his short-run purposes in getting the open-ended expansion from the President, even if he and the JCS feared that it would jeopardize support for the war eventually--as it did (the effect of this deception was not only on the inflation; note what came out of the rejection of my draft! not my policy, my rationalization and sales pitch for the JCS/DOD policy, to which I had no objection, unlike RT).

(send G my Q.M.--or portions of it?

G's first call interrupted my reflections on Howard Zinn's comments on the FBI's use of "plausible denial" (in Covert Action Quarterly). Note that my Q.M. demolition of Schlesinger, Sorensen, and even Goodwin and Hoopes, is of their role in maintaining "plausible denial" (which I was attacking in the case of JFK and the assassination of Diem yesterday, to Hersh!)

(vs. JFK School ideology of Bureaucratic Politics, both reflecting and providing a new basis for Plausible Denial: protecting the President from responsibility and accountability with respect to murder, crime, aggression, and catastrophic error.

See the debate in today's papers about the lack of an Exit Strategy for Bosnia in President (Clinton's!) policy! And the issue: what should experienced/retired people who see the problems be doing about it right now, and over the next few months? preferably now, rather than after troops get engaged, take and give casualties.

(G thinks that guerrilla attacks and mines in the cold weather will lead to savage US retaliation!) (a brand new experience for US troops!) (as for Nazis in Yugoslavia! and Russia). A Cold Vietnam War. Vietnam in frozen mud. A zero option: zero Fahrenheit. A sub-zero option, in terms of weather. Our Afghanistan! Should we get Russian advisors! What good would that do us--except how to withdraw? Counter-guerrilla operations in the cold (not, the Pacific, or Far East, or Vietnam). (Didn't have this in Korea).

How does G know about this? His Special Forces training? (Was Yarborough, his Co, in the audience?)

(What did Westy really believe about attrition, and crossover point? Given his real emphasis on invading NVN (not just, as Pete Dawkins wanted, the Ho Chi Minh trail). And what about Chinese reaction?)

Could JCS strategy really have been accepted by American public, in 1964? Or 1965? They rejected Goldwater; but he looked wild, an Air Force nut, and anyway, he wasn't President: he couldn't sell it as a President could. In 1966-67? Well, maybe so. I just read that polls showed strong support for escalation to win, up till Tet.

What were Westy's true feelings about his directed PR performance in the fall of 1967: light at the end, etc.?

(To generals: my motives were and are entirely patriotic; I was and am exceptionally honest--though after 1971 I extended my honesty to the public; I was strongly anti-communist throughout the Cold War).

[aside: I said to Smith this afternoon that I had feared that Saddam Hussein's control of Saudi oil would or could be even worse than Western imperialism's control of it; just as, after fall of Shah, I would never again say, "Nothing could be worse..."]

Consider the regimes that sit on top of the oil of the Middle East (thinks in large part to our own machinations!). Israel does have some reason to worry. Would they ever have let Saddam get control of Saudi Arabia? Could they stop it--without nuclear weapons? Would they have hesitated to use nucs if necessary?

But ask question: Just how bad would it have been for Saddam--murderous thug as he is--to control Oil? What would the effects have been? (By the way, note that my mocking of Michael Lerner's backing of the Dugan strategy doesn't look so great in light of the outcome--given that Israel stayed out, SH didn't attack Israel or use gas, and Bush didn't go to Baghdad (as CDI predicted firmly). Why did Noam think this would have been so bad--what does he think likely, or possible, to have happened?

Back: even if it would have been disastrous to have followed the Westy strategy, and bad to have followed the JCS strategy, including bombing and mobilization (I would have gone along with it, but consider how it would have developed!)...at least the mobilization strategy would have been honorable, non-deceptive, in preparing the public for what was to come.

What LBJ actually did allowed Schlesinger's and others' Quagmire Myth to extend into the LBJ era (though Schlesinger's intent was to protect JFK, not LBJ; he may not have known about the LBJ tactics). Had LBJ done what nearly all his advisors--certainly, McNamara--wanted, he would have had to bear full responsibility for the big war (as well as losing his Great Society immediately; or, was that truly inevitable? Couldn't he

have managed to protect it, at least as long as he did? And was his continued deception still protecting it in late 66 or 67?)

[What is my real worry about Bosnia now? Krieger supports Clinton; he is going to the White House for a briefing on next Wednesday! He says, no chance of a big war, as big as Vietnam. Maybe not, given the new friendly relationship with Milosevic! and Croatia! If we don't really press for capture and trial of Karadzic and Mladic! and if no one supports, strongly, those in Sarajevo and elsewhere who resist transfers of jurisdiction. Yet, at best--and maybe what's likely--is a prolonged, endless, low-level counterinsurgency conflict, very thankless and dirty: with provocations by our side as well, the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats, as well as by Bosnian Serbs. (Will the Russians fighting under US command be Afghanistan veterans? They may have some advice after all! And how will they behave...e.g., toward Muslims?) (Oh God. Oh Allah. Oi weh.)

Thought: In the nuclear age, there is no way for a President to protect himself wholly against a military critic who will reproach him for not having done everything he could which had a chance of winning, or of improving the odds of winning. Even if he gives the military every capability and action they actually ask for, there would always be a hypothetical use of resources that would be more destructive of life or environment, which could either be suggested, recommended, or retrospectively pointed to. It would, in most cases, be a form of terrorism, though since 1942-44 terrorism would not be ruled out on principle. (There remain thresholds and norms that have never yet been violated, even in fantasy. But faced with failure--prospective or actual--fantasy could always produce a threat or demonstration or "reprisal" that would go beyond what had been authorized. And no one could say conclusively that such a threat or use might not work; it would have some chance. And the President could count on it that someone in the military would be convinced that it had a good chance of working, and would reproach him for it if he failed without having tried it. He could fall back on saying "That would be immoral; or too dangerous in terms of reprisal, or enemy reaction..." which might or might work.

Thus, the effort to avoid reproach means having no absolute limit (in terms of destructive capability, and thus threat-terror capability). It can drive a President to do anything. There is no longer any physical limitation on the violence it can evoke.

(The invention of the Bomb, and its use leading to the arms race and the invention of the H-bomb, assured that there would be neither absolute limits on capability nor extremely strong inhibitions, on moral or normative or precedent grounds, on actual use of terror).

See the movie Money Train, where the gambler trying to collect his bets says, "you don't respond to beatings, so I'll have to go to the next step; your brother will die."

[triggers on ice-9/atmospheric ignition/doomsday machine: and willingness to build it, and to threaten it. this species; dangers of allowing fast neutrons to emerge from fission of U-235. Samson Option: why natyions want triggers. Dangers of gamblers, etc.

[consider metaphors: finger on triggers/hand grenades. Latter with tape off, or pin out, but "handle" still held. No contraction of muscles--action--needed, to make explosion inevitable; just, relaxation (is that an action, or not? It's a choice, a decision, or may be; or it may be...an accident, falling asleep, death, getting tired...). Compare: squeezing a trigger slowly: relaxing into it, making explosion unpredictable, giving up conscious control, so one can't anticipate either firing or kickback, won't flinch in anticipation; keep pressure exerted only in one, reverse direction, not--inadvertently--also to side. Zen: let auto pilot take over, let lower nervous system operate, faster, smoother--given (?) prior practice, repertoire of programmed sequence of movements, "automatic..." wordless...) Compare golf swing, tennis swing...to trigger-pulling.

Letter to paper: op ed: "My son, shot in utility store holdup while his application for a gun permit was pending--used by gun lobby as example of dangers of Brady bill--was shot in the back, as the first announcement of the intent to rob, no prior threat or demand; thus he wouldn't have been protected if he had a gun, "or even a grenade." (Unless he was walking around with a grenade in his hand with the pin pulled! Better than Ossipon in the Secret Agent! He walked around with his finger on a detonator; his deterrent threat required belief by the British--who would have warned him before shooting him--in his "character," his willingness to squeeze the detonator if they attempted to take him into custody.

But Ossipon acknowledged that this approach wouldn't work in America where "they have an anarchistic streak" and would simply shoot him in the back. In America he would have needed a detonator where he would have been squeezing it all the time, and a relaxation would cause a large explosion. But that would have been prone to false alarms, regardless of his character: random jostling or falls--he wasn't an athlete or acrobat, quite the contrary--would have set it off. (What if the British had come up from behind and seized his arms while he was eating, or otherwise using both hands? Did he never eat in public? He was having a beer in the story: presumably with one hand in his pocket).

What kept Ossipon's detonator from being "perfect" was the time delay involved after the trigger was squeezed: several

seconds. The thought made his listener shudder. (Is that thought really so bad? It's not as if the death was slow and painful). It's like Lawrence's thoughts--of mass homicide--as the plane was approaching Nagasaki. Or the 43 seconds. Or a grenade.

TP feels I should "tell the story." He has been trying to get Weizacker to tell the story. But in about 1987 Weizsacker asked Weisskopf (?) whether he should tell it, and Weisskopf said "no, it's too late, let it be..." !

*Sen
Powers?*

What do they fear if they told (Heisenberg, earlier, and the others)? "Not," TP thinks, condemnation by other Germans on grounds of treason, but "They would be pissed on by the whole international community, who would accuse them of being covert Nazis and of lying, being dishonorably self-serving."

(I believe McNamara has been silent so long, and still is, about his attitudes about the war and the sending of combat units under Kennedy, and Johnson, long before 1966-67. He would be accused of lying--precisely when he was telling the truth, at least--in a self-serving manner, putting responsibility off on Johnson, even though he was convicting himself of being a murderous toady, an Eichmann or Speer, of sending all the US troops to what he privately thought was a hopeless and useless risk of death, as well as of keeping silent after 1967-68.

And at the same time, he would feel conflicted, ashamed and guilty, because he was telling a truth against the President, not for him. He would be violating his deepest principles--the one that protects him from ultimate feelings of responsibility for the deaths, for his errors--in favor of what? Of telling the truth, per se (which he cares about not at all; and in this case, wouldn't be thanked for by almost anybody). And demonstrating that he wasn't so dumb, that he had some realistic perceptions early; which he doesn't care about all that much, in a case where he disagreed with the President (LBJ).

"Teach - valid lessons"

*(what he might have
done - based on what
he "knew"/believed)*